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Argentina: Criticism of Videla

Indications of dissatisfaction in the Argentine military with President Videla are becoming more prevalent, but there is as yet no concerted effort to drive him from office.

Some of the criticism of the President and his advisers is probably little more than routine carping. Some of it, however, reflects a fundamental difference with the President's approach, especially his reluctance to take a much tougher line on a broad front of national problems. The appeal of these hard-line critics may increase over time.

Their basic criticism is that Videla has not moved strongly enough against the politicians and labor leaders who were responsible—in these officers' eyes—for leading Argentina to economic and political chaos. In effect, the hardliners are calling for a political system in which most, if not all, civilians would be denied a substantial voice in government.

The hardliners do not dominate any of the services, but some occupy key positions and their activities are causing problems for Videla. The vigilante-style tactics being employed against known or suspected leftists are widely thought to be the work of impatient security and police officers disgusted with the President's gradualist approach. Some high officials are probably in sympathy with these tactics. 3.5(c)

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